

## ALEXANDER WILSON.

## V.—THE COMPLETION OF THE AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGY.

BY FRANK L. BURNS.

Many years after the death of Alexander Wilson, in registering at a hotel near Niagara Falls, Audubon wrote after his name, "Who like Wilson, will ramble, but never, like that great man, die under the lash of a bookseller." This opinion is further emphasized by Miss Malvina Lawson, a daughter of the engraver, in a letter dated from West Chester, February 6, 1879, to Professor S. S. Haldeman, and containing personal recollections of Wilson; in which she bluntly asserts that "to all his other trials was added the fact that killed him—the dishonesty of his publisher."<sup>1</sup> She also writes in part: "When we were children, father often diverged a little when taking us to Bartram's garden to visit the place where his old friend lived and suffered. I do not think there is an inch of ground in that locality that remains the same. . . . I was not seven years old when Wilson died, and my memory of him is in pictures as childhood's memory always is. I remember him offering me a Baltimore yellow bird he had shot in the woods, when coming to our house in the country, and my decided refusal to touch it. But I remember perfectly his brilliant eye and hair black as an Indian's, and as straight."

It is beyond doubt that Wilson lived up to both the spirit and letter of his contract, and it is presumed that the publishers were not delinquent, although not even the author appeared to know exactly what their part called for beyond meeting the expenses. Of the senior member of the firm, Dunlap states: "Mr. Bradford was a man of generous disposition and sound judgment. He headed a list of subscribers (Wilson was a contributor also) to raise a fund for Leslie's<sup>2</sup> maintenance during two years in London and canceled his indenture, although it had four years yet to run." It is not at all improbable that Wilson's publishers deserved the highest praise in-

<sup>1</sup> Penn Monthly, 1879, p. 444.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Robert Leslie, who became a great subject painter.



Inscription over Bartram's  
Study Window.

Taken by Robert S. Redfield  
April 18th, 1883.

“Sweet flows the Scuykill’s winding tide,  
By Bartram’s green emblossom’d bow’rs;  
Where Nature sports, in all her pride  
Of choicest plants, and fruits, and flowers.”

*A Rural Walk.*

stead of censure, for the risk taken in bringing out so expensive a work. An error in judgment might have speedily involved them in ruin. Indeed, Ord is the authority for the statement that they found the expenses burdensome long before the work was completed. It was not the dread of a publisher's wrath that led Wilson to brave the frost and discomforts of a tramp to the Niagara; to risk a passage in a frail boat down the flooded Ohio, despite of the ice, snags and sawyers; or to struggle resolutely onward through the pestilential quagmires of the Mississippi region. He knew that his ambition was laudable and was simply bound to succeed, cost what it might.

In the matter of subscriptions, Ord deprecates the fact that while the little city of New Orleans contributed sixty subscribers in seventeen days, Philadelphia, "of all her literati, her men of benevolence, taste and riches, seventy only, to the period of the author's decease, had the liberality to countenance him by a subscription." Perhaps it has always been characteristic of the "City of Brotherly Love" to depreciate home products, but condemnation in this instance may be softened in consideration of the easy access to the work at the public libraries and that the local market was actually glutted with the projects of talented adventurers. On the whole, Pennsylvania did nobly in furnishing more than one-quarter of the subscriptions, and with New York and Louisiana, over one-half of the total. The South, containing a greater proportion of the leisurely class, gave substantial encouragement freely; and with the two northern states already mentioned, assured the completion of the work. Intellectual New England, according to the subscription list, is accredited with just twenty-four subscriptions! Of the total of four hundred and fifty-nine subscriptions, the greater number were obtained in the few large cities from New York southward.

In a pioneer work of this nature, colored illustrations were deemed not only advisable, but for many reasons considered absolutely indispensable. Had the entire seventy-six plates been engraved by Alexander Lawson instead of the fifty plates bearing his signature, the result would not only have been

greater uniformity, but would have conferred greater honors upon the artist and relieved him of much vexation. George Murry contributed plates 3, 7, 9, 15, and 26; his connection ceased after the third volume. B. Tanner was responsible for plate 32 of the following volume; and another engraver signed himself variously as Warnicke, J. Warnicke, or J. G. Warnicke, on twenty plates in the last five volumes, and occasionally raised his work above mediocrity: his figure of the Ruffed Grouse being his best.

After examining the original drawings of Wilson, Dr. Coues has declared: "One thing is shown very clearly by this set of pictures, and the public does not know it yet. This is the *decided superiority of the originals* in comparison with the published engravings. It has always been supposed, and apparently vouched for by Wilson's own declarations, that the excellence of his plates was largely due to the skill and care of his engraver. This is not so. Without wishing to detract in the least from Mr. Lawson's merit and well-earned fame, I should say Wilson might thank him for nothing remarkable. The plates, in some cases, are 'loud' and garish in comparison with the delicacy of tone and excellence of perspective that the originals show. This is specially notable in the cases of one or two of the plates that represent scenery and grouping, as those of the Ducks. . . . One other thing came forcibly to my mind as I turned these sheets of paper nervously. Very few of them—I remember but one—are dated or signed, or bear MS. witness of what they are. This man, of eager, half-desponding, half-exulting ambition as he was, seemed to have felt some shrinking in modesty from affixing his name to his pictures." Coues further comments: "I was fairly oppressed with the sad story of poverty, even destitution, which these raw sheets of coarse paper told. Some of Wilson's originals are on the fly-leaves of old books, showing binder's marks along one edge. One of the best portraits, that of the Duck Hawk, is on two pieces of paper pasted together. The man was actually too poor to buy paper! Some of the drawings are on both sides of the paper: some show a full picture on one side, and part of a mutilated finished painting on the other.

Some show the rubbing process by which they were transferred. They are in all stages of completeness, from the rudest outlines to the finished painting. Some are left half-dressed, with penciled instructions to the engraver to fill in red ochre here, and yellow ochre there, etc. Wilson sometimes finished the bills and feet in full detail and coloring, leaving much of the plumage blank.”<sup>1</sup>

Wilson composed a charming preface for his initial volume, writing in a lighter and happier vein than in those following. It is worth repeating. Few have read it, because the original prefaces have not appeared in the various popular editions: “The whole use of a preface seems to be either to elucidate the nature and origin of the work or to invoke the clemency of the reader. Such observations as have been thought necessary for the former, will be found in the Introduction; extremely solicitous to obtain the latter, I beg leave to relate the following anecdote: In one of my visits to a friend’s in the country, I found their youngest son, a fine boy of eight or nine years of age, who usually resides in town for his education, just returning from a ramble through the neighboring woods and fields, where he had collected a large and handsome bunch of wild flowers of a great many different colors; and presenting them to his mother, said, with much animation in his countenance, ‘Look, my dear ma, what beautiful flowers I have found growing on our place! Why, all the woods are full of them! red, orange, blue, and ’most every color. O, I can gather you a whole parcel of them, much handsomer than these, all growing in our own woods! Shall I, ma? Shall I go and bring more?’ The good woman received the bunch of flowers with a smile of affectionate complacency; and, after admiring for some time the beautiful simplicity of Nature, gave her willing consent; and the little fellow went off, on the wings of ecstasy, to execute his delightful commission.

“The similitude of this little boy’s enthusiasm to my own, struck me; and the reader will need no explanations of mine to make the application. Should my country receive with the

<sup>1</sup> Coues, “Behind the Vail.” B. N. O. C., Vol. V, 1880, pp. 197-198.

same gracious indulgence the specimens which I here humbly present her; should she express a desire for me to go and bring her more, the highest wishes of my ambition will be gratified; for, in the language of my little friend, our whole woods are full of them! and I can collect hundreds more, much handsomer than these.”

It is fortunate for the truthfulness of the text that Wilson took little for granted in the matter of life histories. To illustrate the careful manner in which he labored before making a statement, one or two instances will be sufficient. That the Nighthawk and Whippoorwill were one and the same species, was accepted as a fact by both William Bartram and Dr. B. S. Barton, of Philadelphia, who were undoubtedly the leading American authorities of the period. Wilson desired proof, so he shot thirteen specimens of the former at different times and at different places, nine were found by dissection to be males and four females. Two others were shot as they flushed from their eggs, and found to agree with the four preceding. A Whippoorwill was shot in the evening, while in the act of repeating his usual notes, three others were secured at different times of the day, two of them females, one of them having been sitting on two eggs. Not only the difference in plumage, notes and habits, but the difference in the eggs of the two species, were noted. The result was not only convincing proof for his friend Bartram, but the introduction of a new species in the Whippoorwill.

The learned Barton had asserted that no fact in ornithology was better established than that of the occasional torpidity of the Barn Swallow and Chimney Swift,<sup>1</sup> and he was not alone in his belief. After careful investigations of some years, Wilson pronounced the hibernation of these birds during the winter months a myth, and ridicules the idea under the head of the Barn Swallow: . . . “ Yet this little *winged seraph*, if I may so speak, who, in a few days, and at will, can pass from the borders of the arctic regions to the torrid zone, is forced, when winter approaches, to descend to the bottom of lakes, rivers,

<sup>1</sup>Tilloch's Philosophical Magazine, Vol. XXI, 1805, pp. 204-211; and Vol. XXXV, 1810. Pp. 241-247.

and mill ponds to bury itself in the mud with eels and snapping turtles; or to creep ingloriously into a cavern, a rat hole, or a hollow tree, there to doze with snakes, toads, and other reptiles until the return of spring! Is not this true, ye wise men of Europe and America, who have published so many *credible* narrations on this subject? . . . Is then the organization of the Swallow less delicate than that of a man? Can a bird, whose vital functions are destroyed by a short privation of pure air and its usual food, sustain, for six months, a situation where the most robust man would perish in a few hours or minutes? Away with such absurdities! They are unworthy of a serious refutation."

The whereabouts of the Chimney Swift during the colder months is still a mystery, but no doubt time will vindicate the judgment of the clear-headed Wilson in this instance, as it has already done in that of the Swallow. However, one of our most brilliant ornithologists, as late as 1878, when in one of his argumentative moods, in answer to his own question of where the Chimney Swift goes in winter, writes: "I suppose that it hibernates in hollow trees, and could give reasons for the suppositions."<sup>1</sup> Professor W. W. Cooke recently stated:<sup>2</sup> "With troops of fledglings, catching their winged prey as they go, and lodging by night in some tall chimney, the flocks drift slowly south, joining with other bands, until on the northern coast of the Gulf of Mexico they become an innumerable host. Then they disappear. Did they drop into the water and hibernate in the mud, as was believed of old, their obliteration could not be more complete. In the last week in March a joyful twittering far overhead announces their return to the Gulf coast, but the intervening five months is still the Swift's secret."

Of the comparatively few observers upon whom Wilson could place reliance, William Bartram, who had aided Edwards half a century earlier; was perhaps quoted the oftenest. John Abbott, of Savannah, an artist and student of Nature,

<sup>1</sup> Coues, *Birds of Colorado Valley*, 1878, p. 377.

<sup>2</sup> Some New Facts About the Migrations of Birds. Year Book of the Dept. of Agri. for 1903, p. 386.

furnished him both notes and specimens at a price mutually agreeable. Dr. Samuel L. Mitchell, of New York, favored him with an excellent study of the Pinnated Grouse; and John L. Gardner, of Gardner's Island, considerable data on the Bald Eagle, Osprey and Fish Crow. He was also indebted to Dr. Nathan Potter, of Baltimore, for manuscript on the Cowbird; and to Judge John Joseph Henry, of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, for information relating to the Purple Martin. From Charles Wilson Peale, the portrait painter, he received much material in the way of specimens; and he reciprocated by depositing many of his types and rare specimens in Peale's museum, which, from a gallery of portraits of historical personages painted by the proprietor since 1784, had gradually embraced: "Everything that walks, creeps, swims, or flies, and all things else." The founder deserves more than passing notice. In an Introduction to a Course of Lectures on Natural History, delivered at the University of Pennsylvania, November 16, 1799, and published in 1800, he quaintly says: "Little did I then know of the labour I was bringing on these shoulders,—though I was called *mad*, and cautioned to beware of the gulph into which many others of greater merit had fallen,—*neglect and poverty*. Yet so irresistibly bewitching is the thirst of knowledge with science of nature that neither the want of funds, nor leasure from other occupations, could damp my ardour, though a thousand difficulties rose in succession."

Two volumes remained to be published when the master laid down the pen, pencil and brush. No one promising the ready versatility of the lamented Wilson, could be found. It was fortunate, therefore, that little beyond editing the author's notes for the final volume, was required. George Ord had done good field work under the eye of Wilson during the last few years, and to him as an almost sacred trust, fell the task of completing the contract broken by the death of the author. Volume VIII required the engraving of a single plate and the writing of the preface, Volume IX the editing of, and in some instances, the supplying the want of Wilson's notes. The plates having already been engraved, Ord performed the part under his control acceptably, apparently without thought of



claiming joint authorship at this time. It is said that Wilson as a crowning effort toward artistic excellence, had intended coloring the chief parts of these plates himself; and the publishers had resource to an artist who formerly enjoyed the confidence of the author by his skill. The final volumes appeared in January and May, 1814. George Ord was born in Philadelphia, 1781, and died January 23, 1866. He was one of the first vice-presidents, and later the president, of the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences. His biography does not appear in any work with which I am familiar.

The awakening produced by the appearance of Wilson's fine work quite naturally led to further discoveries in the ornithological line and a demand for supplements or a continuance of the work in similar style. The recently organized Academy of Natural Sciences was attracting men of ability in this line of research: Ord, Say, Peale, Harlan, Bonaparte, Rafinesque, Harris, Townsend, Nuttall, Audubon, Trudeau, and others. The first three gentlemen, and William Maclure, president of the Philadelphia Academy for some years, had made a collecting trip in company to Georgia and East Florida in 1818, which was interrupted by Indian troubles. Three years earlier, in Guthrie's *Geography*, Ord had given technical names to a number of new birds first mentioned in the belated government report of the Lewis and Clark Expedition of 1804-06; and in his eulogistic remarks on Wilson, said: "May his noble example stimulate some zealous naturalist to complete the design of our ornithologist; a task by no means easy of execution, but if accomplished with like success, will be attended with honour and fame commensurate to the hazard and difficulty of the undertaking."

Agreeable to the orders of Secretary of War J. C. Calhoun, an exploring and scientific expedition was organized, and departed for the Missouri river region on May 5, 1819, floating down the Ohio river from Pittsburgh. It was under the command of Major Stephen H. Long, with Lieutenant Graham and Cadet W. H. Swift as assistants. Major O'Fallon subsequently became attached to the party as Indian agent. The scientific corps included Dr. Baldwin, botanist; Thomas Say,

zoologist; Mr. Jessup, geologist; Titian R. Peale, assistant naturalist; Samuel Seymour, artist.

It appears that the civilian attaches wore the fatigue dress of common soldiers. On October 11 Major Long, Mr. Jessup and several other persons took leave of their friends at Engineer Cantonment and descended the Missouri in a canoe, on their way to Washington and Philadelphia. Say furnished an account of the expedition during the commander's absence; also all descriptions of birds, mammals, and insects. August 24, 1820, Major Long arrived at St. Louis on his way from Philadelphia to Council Bluff to rejoin the party, accompanied by Captain John R. Bell, who was to relieve Lieutenant Graham; and Dr. Edwin James, who had been appointed to serve as botanist and geologist on recommendations of Dr. Torrey and Captain LeConte in place of Dr. Baldwin, who had died at Franklin on August 31, 1819, and Mr. Jessup, who had returned. They arrived at Engineer Cantonment on May 28, 1820. The expedition now consisted of twenty persons. Say headed a party and rendered an account of a trip down the Arkansas river, where he lost clothing, Indian presents, and valuable manuscript notes by deserting soldiers. On October 12, 1820, the reunited party assembled at Cape Girardeau on the Mississippi and dissolved via New Orleans, about the first of November. Peale's sketches amounted to 122, of which 21 only were finished, the residue being merely outline sketches of quadrupeds, birds, insects, etc. More than 60 prepared skins of new and rare animals were deposited in the Philadelphia (Peale's) museum. Youmans is the authority for the statement that Say refused the opportunity of acting as historian and Edwin James compiled the report as published in 1823.

As a bird biographer, Wilson had no immediate followers, excepting Audubon. Ord scarcely attempted it, Say was more of an entomologist than ornithologist, and Peale wrote little until he made his report on the birds of the United States Exploring Expedition to the South Seas.

At length the demand for a continuation on the plan of Wilson was met by the announcement of Charles Lucian Bonaparte, who says in part: "A love for the same department of

natural science, and a desire to complete the vast enterprise so far advanced by Wilson's labors, has induced us to undertake the present work, in order to illustrate what premature death prevented him from accomplishing, as well as the discoveries subsequently made in the feathered tribes of these States. This undertaking was not precipitately decided on, nor until the author had well ascertained that no one else was willing to engage in the work."

Hugh Miller comments on this: "How vastly more strange and extravagant looking truth is than fiction! Our Edinburgh reviewers deemed it one of the gravest among the many grave offenses of Wordsworth, that he should have made the hero of the 'Excursions' a pedlar; and if so severe on the mere choice of so humble a hero, what would they not have said had the poet ventured to represent his pedlar, not only as an accomplished writer, and a successful cultivator of natural sciences, the author of a great work, eloquent as that of Buffon, and incomparably more truthful in its facts and observations? Nay, what would they have said if, rising to the extreme of extravagance, he had ventured to relate that the pedlar, having left the magnificent work unfinished at his death, an accomplished Prince — the nephew of by far the most puissant monarch of modern times — took it up, and completed it in a volume bearing honorable reference and testimony in almost every page, to the ability and singular faithfulness of his humble predecessor, the 'Wanderer.' And yet, this strange story would be exactly that of the Paisley pedlar, Alexander Wilson."<sup>1</sup>

Charles Lucian Bonaparte, Prince of Canino, and at the death of Lucian, his father, Prince of Musignano, was born in Paris, May 24, 1803, and appeared in the train of his uncle and father-in-law, Joseph Bonaparte, ex-king of Spain, about 1822. He is described by Dr. Edward Porter in a private letter dated October 25, 1825, as "a little set, black-eyed fellow, quite talkative, and withal an interesting and companionable fellow."<sup>2</sup> He concerned himself chiefly in nomenclature and classification. Indulging in some little field work about Philadelphia,

<sup>1</sup> History of the Bass Rock.

<sup>2</sup> Stone, Auk, XVI, 1899, p. 170

Long Branch, and Bordentown, New Jersey, the latter being the location of Joseph Bonaparte's estate, he devoted the most of his time to literary research and the critical examination of the preserved remains of birds. He was deficient in all that made Wilson great, yet such was his marvelous gift of discrimination and systematization, that he became one of the most famous ornithologists of his time. The work which had been performed by Wilson's hands alone now gave employment to several individuals. Titian R., the fourth son of Charles Wilson Peale, not only collected many of the birds figured while on the Long expedition, which were credited to Thomas Say, who originally described them in footnotes scattered through the report; or in a subsequent private trip to Florida during the winter and spring of 1825, under the patronage of Bonaparte; but also drew the figures engraved for the first, and two plates for the fourth and last volume. A German emigrant by the name of Alexander Rider, of whom little is known beyond that he was a miniature painter in 1813, and a portrait and historical painter in 1818, was responsible for the remainder of the drawings with the exception of the two figures of plate 4 of volume I, which he doubtless reduced from Audubon's large drawing, to the proper dimensions for the work. Bonaparte states plainly in the text, that his representations of the Boat-tailed Grackle were drawn by that zealous observer of nature and skillful artist, John J. Audubon; and Lawson has engraved on the plate, "Drawn by John J. Audubon and A. Rider." Ord, however, insisted that they were drawn by Rider from specimens brought from East Florida by Peale and himself. Bonaparte pronounced Rider's figure of the immature Red-headed Woodpecker the best representation of a bird ever published. It does indeed show to advantage in comparison with the poorly-colored figures of the Florida Jay and Northern Three-toed Woodpecker, on the same plate. Rider was also the expert colorist, not always up to the mark as evinced by a letter from Florence, October 5, 1829, in which Bonaparte says to Lawson: "That confounded Rider has enraged us to a pretty considerable extent. Look at volume first, all the red and

orange tints have been obliterated! . . . Shame upon him for employing such colors!"<sup>1</sup>

Ord, Say, Peale, and Audubon furnished him with notes, chiefly biographical; and a Mr. Leadbeater, of London, sent some of his rarest specimens across the ocean that Bonaparte might examine and paint them on this side of the Atlantic. The author in his preface of the first volume, says: "To my friends, Mr. Thomas Say, and Dr. John D. Godman, my sincere thanks are due for the care they have bestowed in preventing the introductions of foreign expressions, or phrases not idiomatic, into my composition." Youmans says that almost all of Bonaparte's publications while in America were corrected and arranged for the press by Say. Yet he almost immediately writes of the latter: "Having been intolerant of literary studies in his youth, he never attained too happy command of language"; and also, "When Dr. Baldwin, the botanist and historian of Major Long's first expedition died, Say refused the opportunity, which his commander offered him, of continuing the journal of the expedition, alleging that he was incompetent for this responsible employment."<sup>2</sup>

Exclusive of his own work, Bonaparte seemed to have placed his chief reliance in his engraver. "Lawson can do no wrong." Alexander Lawson, the best engraver of birds in America, was born near Lanark, Scotland, in 1773, and came to Philadelphia in 1794. "A tall thin man of large frame, and athletic; full of animation, and inclined to be satirical, but as I should judge, full of good feeling and the love of truth. Krimmel<sup>3</sup> and Wilson he speaks of in rapturous terms of commendation, both as to talents and moral worth."<sup>4</sup> It is probable that to Lawson, Bonaparte is indebted for much of the excellence and accuracy of the plates. He relates of a captive Condor that, "during Mr. Lawson's almost daily visits for the purpose of measuring and examining accurately every

<sup>1</sup> Penn Monthly, 1879, p. 454.

<sup>2</sup> Pioneers of Science in America, 1896, pp. 221-222.

<sup>3</sup> Johann Ludwig Kimmel, a young painter of extraordinary gifts, drowned while bathing near Philadelphia in 1821.

<sup>4</sup> Dmlap's History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States, 1834.

part for his engraving, he became so familiar and well acquainted that he would pull the paper out of the artist's hands, or take the spectacles from his nose, so that Mr. Lawson, seduced by these blandishments, and forgetting its character in other respects, does not hesitate to declare the Condors the gentlest birds he had ever had to deal with." The above illustrates the extraordinary pains taken by the engraver to insure the "minuteness of accuracy" so frequently praised by the author.

However, but for this gentleman's prejudice and obstinacy, some of Audubon's drawings might have been introduced. Audubon dwells briefly upon the unpleasant occasion: "[Philadelphia] April 14 [1824]. After breakfast met the prince, who called with me on Mr. Lawson, the engraver of Mr. Wilson's plates. This gentleman's figure nearly reached the roof. His face was sympathetically long, and his tongue was so long that we obtained no opportunity of speaking in his company. Lawson said my drawings were too soft, too much like oil paintings, and objected to engrave them." Lawson's verbal account of the same meeting, published not long afterward by Dunlap, exhibits a certain snobbishness not without grim humor. "One morning, very early, Bonaparte roused him from bed—he was accompanied by a rough fellow, bearing a portfolio. They were admitted and the portfolio opened, in which were a number of paintings of birds, executed in crayons or pastels, which were displayed as the work of an untaught wild man from the woods by Bonaparte, and as such the engraver thought them very extraordinary. Bonaparte admired them exceedingly, and expatiated upon their merit as originals from nature, and painted by a self-taught genius. Audubon—for the 'rough fellow' who had borne the portfolio, was the ornithologist and artist—sat by in silence. At length in the course of their examination, they came to the picture of the 'Horned Owl.' Bonaparte, who had been liberal in admiration and commendation throughout the exhibition, now declared this portrait to be superior to Wilson's of the same grave personage. 'It is twice as big,' said the engraver. . . . Lawson told me he spoke freely of the pictures, and said that

they were all ill-drawn, not true to nature, and anatomically incorrect. Audubon said nothing. Bonaparte defended them, said he would buy them, and Lawson should engrave them. 'You may buy them,' said the Scotchman, 'but I will not engrave them.' 'Why not?' 'Because ornithology requires truth in forms and correctness in lines. Here are neither.' . . . After a time Charles Bonaparte came again to the engraver, bringing with him one of the pictures, which he said he had bought, and requested to have it engraved for his work. Lawson consented, but it was found to be too large for the book. Bonaparte wanted him to reduce it. 'No, I will engrave it line for line, but I will not reduce it, or correct it in any part. Let him reduce it and I will engrave it.' Soon after Audubon came to the engraver with the same picture and said, 'I understand you object to engraving this?' 'Yes.' 'Why so?' 'This leg does not join the body as in nature. This bill is, in the crow, straight, sharp, wedge-like. You have made it crooked and wavy. The feathers are too large.' 'I have seen them twice as large.' 'Then it is a species of crow I have never seen. I think your painting very extraordinary for one who is self-taught—but we in Philadelphia are accustomed to seeing very correct drawings.' 'Sir, I have been instructed seven years by the greatest masters in France.' 'Then you have made dom bad use of your time,' said the Scotchman. 'Sir,' said Lawson to the writer, 'he measured me with his eye, and but that he found me a big fellow, I thought he might have knocked me down.'"

Perhaps it is fortunate for the fame of the great American bird painter, that the well-meant efforts of his fellow-countryman to aid him came to naught through the irascibility of the Scot.

It would be a matter of deep interest to know just what Wilson received from his publishers for coloring his plates, since it comprised the total received for his work. Doubtless it was none too much. The following entry in Audubon's journal while on this visit, is significant: "April 15. Prince Canino (C. L. Bonaparte) engaged me to superintend his drawings intended for publication, but my terms being much dearer than

Alexander Wilson asked, I was asked to discontinue this work." Like Wilson's Louisville note, this needs some explanation. Aside from the knowledge that Audubon was in a manner *persona non grata* to both Titian Peale, the artist (of whom he bitterly complained that after he had shown him all his drawings, refused him the sight of a new bird in his possession), and Alexander Lawson, the engraver (who severely criticised and refused to engrave his paintings), Bonaparte would scarcely have trusted an untried person, however talented, in any other capacity than that of colorer. The reference to Wilson must relate to his contract as colorist to the publishers of his work, this being the only employment in which he received pay; and of course cannot apply to the former's work, since Bonaparte was scarcely more than ten years of age at the time of Wilson's death.

With the appearance of the first volume in 1825, containing land birds only, Bonaparte remarked that owing to the industry of Wilson he was unable to adduce a single new Pennsylvanian bird, and for the contents he was obliged to resort to the western territories. Many of these birds had already been made known by Say, and he was fortunate in procuring the drawings made at the time from the freshly killed specimens by Peale, the ornithologist of the party. It was planned to have the second volume contain the water birds, and the third to chiefly consist of Peale's gleanings from Florida, so that with the nine previously published by Wilson and Ord, the whole subject would have been embraced in twelve volumes; but extended researches to the most opposite and remote parts of the Union brought enough land birds to make up two volumes; and the water birds were reserved for a fourth volume.

Bonaparte returned to Europe some time in November, 1826, since Audubon records in his European journal under the date of December 7, "I saw in this day's paper that Charles Bonaparte had arrived at Liverpool in the 'Canada' from New York." Volume II and III came out in 1828. The year previous he had published his Catalogue of the Birds of the United States,<sup>1</sup> and his Supplement to the Genera of North

<sup>1</sup> Contributions to the Maclurian Lyceum of Arts and Sciences, I, pp. 8-34.



American Birds,<sup>1</sup> which, according to Coues, raised the number of species to 366, and of genera to 83, nearly a hundred species having thus been made known since Ord laid aside the pen that Wilson had dropped. Apparently the author had nearly completed his share of the work on the fourth number before his departure, and why Carey, Lea, and Carey delayed its publication until 1833, is impossible to conjecture, unless it was incident to the change in the firm which became Carey and Lea, with William Brown as printer as formerly. In a letter to his engraver in October, 1829, the author expressed surprise that he has heard nothing of it and directs Lawson to draw on his account, or, preferably, the publishers, for services as engraver; generously suggesting that the price 60 (dollars?) as fixed by publishers, should be 90 (dollars?) the price paid for the engraving of the Condor plate. The Prince had planned a fifth volume, and Lawson was to begin on a plate composed of the Canada Goose, a large Godwit with a black tail, and a young *Phenicapierus*; and continue with the Pelican, Gulls, &c. His scientific friend, William Cooper, of New York, to whom he had dedicated the Cooper's Hawk, was to furnish the drawings, and the birds, as well as all the directions. Of this nothing further is heard.

Coues aptly terms Bonaparte's American Ornithology a quasi-continuation of Wilson's work, gotten up in similar style, if not spirit; and warns the student that the original distinction and complete separation of the two works must be fully recognized.

In figuring and describing the females and immatures of a number of species, Bonaparte supplied a desiderata, and rendered his labors, in a manner, supplementary to that of Wilson. The work is not remarkable for the number of new species described, although here the majority are correctly figured for the first time. The Semipalmated Plover (*Ægialitis semipalmata*)<sup>2</sup> he had already found distinct and had separated it from Wilson's Ring Plover (*Charadrius histicula*) which Ord

<sup>1</sup> Zoological Journal, III, pp. 49-53.

<sup>2</sup> Observations on the Nomenclature of Wilson's Ornithology. Jour. Acad. Nat. Sci., Phila., V, 1825, p. 98.

had renamed the Piping Plover (*A. meloda*). The Zenaida Dove (*Zenaida zenaida*) and Limpkin (*Aramus gigantus*)<sup>1</sup> had been described by him soon after Peale, his collector, returned from Florida. Professor Trotter<sup>2</sup> suggested that the Zenaida Dove was so named in honor of the author's wife, Zenaida Charlotte Julie, daughter of Joseph Bonaparte, the ex-king of Spain. Peale's Egret (*Dichromanassa pcalci*), taken by T. R. Peale in Florida; and the Stilt Sandpiper (*Micropalma himantopus*), which he had taken himself while in company with William Cooper, at Long Branch, New Jersey, July, 1826; were described in a paper read November 26 of that year, in New York.<sup>3</sup> The Yellow-headed Blackbird (*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*) had been described elsewhere, but the want of an original name was not discovered until shortly before this time.<sup>4</sup> The Sage Grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) described the year previous<sup>5</sup> through the courtesy of Mr. Leadbeater from the only known preserved specimen; had been found in great abundance by the Lewis and Clark expedition.

The Burrowing Owl (*Speotyto cunicularia hypogæa*) had been found in the West by the Long expedition, but Say considered it and the South American and West Indian of Molina and Vieillot, inseparable: Bonaparte, however, threw an anchor to windward, in the shape of a footnote: "Should they prove to be different species, new appellations must be given: and, as that of *Strix cunicularia* will, by right of priority, be exclusively retained by the Coquimbo Owl, we would propose for the present bird the name of *Strix hypogæa*."

Two species only were perfectly new to science, the Cooper's Hawk (*Accipiter cooperi*) taken presumably by the author, in

<sup>1</sup> Additions to the Ornithology of the United States, *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.

<sup>2</sup> Cassinia, IX, 1905, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Further Additions to the Ornithology of the United States; and Observations on the Nomenclature of Certain Species, *Annals Lyc. Nat. Hist.*, New York, II, 1828, pp. 154 and 157.

<sup>4</sup> On the distinctions of two species of *Icterus*, hitherto confounded under the specific name of *Icterocephalus*, *Jour. Acad. Nat. Sci. Phila.*, V, 1825, p. 223.

<sup>5</sup> *Zoological Journal*, III, 1827, p. 213.

the latter part of September, near Bordentown, New Jersey, and Say's Phoebe (*Sayornis saya*), shot by Peale on July 17, 1820, near the Arkansas river, about twenty miles from the Rocky Mountains. Whether the latter had been overlooked, considered a doubtful species by Say, or reserved for some one else to describe in honor of the zoologist, is not known.

Audubon met Bonaparte again in London, June 18, 1827, and writes: "His mustachios, his bearded chin, his fine head and eye, all were the same." Four days later Bonaparte and some other gentlemen called upon Audubon. "My portfolios were opened before this set of learned men and they saw many birds they had not dreamed of. Charles offered to name them for me, and I felt happy that he should; and with pencil he actually christened upward of fifty, urging me to publish them at once in manuscript at the Zoological Society. These gentlemen dropped off one by one, leaving only Charles and Mr. Vigors. . . . I cannot tell you how surprised I was when at Charles' lodging, to hear his man-servant call him 'Your Royal Highness.' I thought this ridiculous in the extreme, and I cannot conceive how good Charles can bear it; though probably he *does* bear it because he *is* good Charles." On December 4 he records: "A letter from Charles Bonaparte tells me he has decided not to reside in America, but in Florence: this I much regret."

Bonaparte soon busied himself in preparation of his *Fauna Italica*, and, in a manner, severed his active participation in American ornithology with the appearance of his *Geographical and Comparative List of the Birds of Europe and the United States* in 1838, though his influence is felt in our nomenclature up to the year of his demise. He died in Paris, July 29, 1857.

It can be said of the Prince that for all his royal pretensions he appeared at best advantage when surrounded by a scientific atmosphere. He fraternized with the votaries of art, science and literature, whatever their condition or previous position in life. He was second only to Ord in his admiration and appreciation of the genius of his predecessor, and Ord was peculiarly sensitive to anything touching the fame

and honor of Wilson. He vastly enriched the ornithological literature of the world, and laid the foundation in this country of that apparently fascinating drudgery, characterized "synonymy," which is so easily degenerated into a bore.

[Since writing the above, Rhoads' brief memoir of George Ord has appeared in the *Cassinia*, No. XII, 1908 (issued March, 1909). The author has been unable to ascertain whether the subject of his sketch was born in Philadelphia or England. I have been informed by Henry T. Coates, who has it direct from Willis P. Hazard, an old-time collector of Wilson's, that Ord was born and had died in the same house on Front street.]

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#### THE STATUS OF THE AMERICAN BARN OWL (*Strix pratincola*) IN PICKAWAY COUNTY, OHIO.

BY B. R. BALES, M.D.

Like several other species, notably Bewick's Wren and the Mockingbird, it has only been in comparatively recent years that the Barn Owl has been considered an Ohio bird. In Dr. J. M. Wheaton's "Report of the Birds of Ohio," published in 1880, only five instances of this bird's capture had been recorded in this state, and one of these specimens was taken in Pickaway County. At the time that Dr. Howard Jones informed Dr. Wheaton of the capture of this species in the summer of 1873, he also informed him of a specimen taken in the spring of 1870, but for some unaccountable reason, this record was not incorporated in Dr. Wheaton's Report. Both of these birds were killed in the Scioto River bottoms, west of Circleville. Only one of these was preserved, it being sent to the Museum of Hobart College at Geneva, N. Y. On February 14, 1890, a specimen that had been taken in the Scioto River bottom west of Circleville was brought to me; this was the first Barn Owl I had ever seen. In May of the following year, 1891, a bird of the year, fully feathered, was brought to me; it had been shot at Forest Cemetery, which is bounded on one side by the Ohio Canal, and is less than a mile north of Circleville.

In 1892, a specimen was shot at the Turney farm, about two and one-half miles west of Circleville, and was mounted by Mr. Oliver Davie for Mr. R. G. McCoy, who was living on this farm at the time.